As the crow flies

The expression ***as the crow flies*** is an idiom for the most direct path between two points, rather similar to "in a beeline". This meaning is attested from the early 19th century,[1][2] and appeared in Charles Dickens's 1838 novel *Oliver Twist*:

A crow flying across the terrain

> *We cut over the fields at the back with him between us – straight as the crow flies – through hedge and ditch.*[1]

Crows do conspicuously fly alone across open country, but neither crows nor bees (as in "beeline") fly in particularly straight lines.[3] While crows do not swoop in the air like swallows or starlings, they often circle above their nests.[3]

One suggested origin of the term is that before modern navigational methods were

introduced, cages of crows were kept upon ships and a bird would be released from the crow's nest when required to assist navigation, in the hope that it would fly directly towards land.[1] However, the earliest recorded uses of the term are not nautical in nature, and the crow's nest of a ship is thought to derive from its shape and position rather than its use as a platform for releasing crows.[1] It has also been suggested that crows would not travel well in cages, as they fight if confined.[4]

See also

- Distance

- Geodesic
- Great-circle distance

References

1. *Allen, Robert (2008). Allen's Dictionary of English Phrases (https://books.google.com/books?id=uEM_viK7i4AC&q=%22as+the+crow+flies%22&pg=PT644) . Penguin UK. ISBN 9780141917689.*
2. *Knowles, Elizabeth (2006). The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (https://books.google.com/books?id=Urg3hNc4tu0C&q=%22as+the+crow+flies%22&pg=PT419) . Oxford University Press, UK. ISBN 9780191578564.*
3. *Villazon, Luis. "Do crows actually fly in a straight line?" (http://www.sciencefocus.co*

m/article/do-crows-actually-fly-straight-line) , BBC Focus (August 30, 2017).

4. *"World Wide Words: As the crow flies" (http://www.worldwidewords.org/qa/qa-ast1.htm) . World Wide Words.*

Further reading

- Dundes, Alan (2004). "As the Crow Flies: A Straightforward Study of Lineal Worldview in American Folk Speech". In Lau, Kimberley J.; et al. (eds.). *What Goes Around Comes Around: The Circulation of Proverbs in Contemporary Life* (https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/usupress_pubs/33/) . Utah State

University Press. pp. 171–187. ISBN 978-0-87421-592-2.

- Winfield, Charles H. (1882). *Adjudged Words and Phrases: Being a Collection of Adjudicated Definitions of Terms Used in the Law, with References to Authorities* (https://archive.org/details/cu31924022835601) . Jersey City, NJ: J.J. Griffiths. p. 45 (https://archive.org/details/cu31924022835601/page/n54) . OCLC 3364516 (https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/3364516) . "as the crow flies."

External links

Look up ***as the crow flies*** in Wiktionary, the free dictionary.

- "As the crow flies" (http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/as-the-crow-flies.html) *The Phrase Finder*.
- "As the crow flies" (http://www.worldwidewords.org/qa/qa-ast1.htm) *World Wide Words*.

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